565 Nayar subjects within the kingdom. Between
613 kingdoms, royal lineages disputed for rank and
631 would not intermarry: though exogamous, therefore, each lineage considered itself to form a separate and unique [13] subcaste. The Cochin lineage, being more ancient than the rest, claimed the ritual rank of Kshattriyas (the second of the four varnas or major caste-groups of ancient North India Vedic Society, in ancient times kings and warriors.) The Walluvanad and Calicut lineages, of more recent Nayar origin, were not strictly recognized as Kshattriyas, but were accorded the title of Samantans, a Sanskrit word meaning "leaders." In each royal lineage, the oldest man of the whole lineage, irrespective of branch, was the crowned king and administered traditional secular rule with assistance from advisers of wealthy Nambudiri families of the kingdom, some of whom were employed as ambassadors.

[643]

Each kingdom was divided into nads or chiefdoms. In the Zamorin's kingdom, at the height of its power, some of these nads were former independent kingdoms which had been conquered by Calicut but were still ruled by their traditional monarchs who paid tribute to Calicut. These nads included Parappanad, Beypore and Chavakkad, each of whose rulers, though feudatory, claimed and were accorded higher ritual rank than the Zamorin's lineage by reason of their more ancient tradition of government. Other nads of the Calicut kingdom were ruled by hereditary Nayar chiefs (naduvaris) originally appointed by the Zamorin. [14] These ruled with

642 565 The "middle class" non-military Nayars, the Nayar servant castes of menials, all the lower polluting castes, and the serfs, were excluded from the administrative system of the kingdom. Above these castes, the "good" castes formed two hierarchies, the one concerned with the public ritual of the state, and the other with secular administration. The first hierarchy comprised Nambudiris and temple servants; the second, royalty, chiefs and Nayar retainers. Nambudiris were largely outside the legal system of the kingdom; temple servants, though subject to it, took no part in its administration. Political organization was in the hands of the Nayars, their chiefs, and their royal lineage.

643 701 631 While responsible for maintaining traditional unwritten law and custom (mamool) among the several castes, the kings were concerned chiefly with amassing soldiers for their armies. Though in each kingdom the royal lineage owned the land in many villages as its private estate, its strength was estimated not in territory but in numbers of Nayar soldiers. Each nad and each desam was classified according to the number of Nayar men it could customarily muster for war; records[31]of these were kept by the 702 Nayar clerks of the palaces. The chief duty of each naduvari was to assemble regularly the soldiers of his nad for military exercises, and in time of war to lead them to battle with the king himself at their head. Within the nad military training was organized on a village basis, sometimes by the Nayar desavari, or, in those villages without a Nayar headman, by a Nayar

721 temporary ritual privileges in the important Nambudiri-managed temples of alien kingdoms. Several times rights in such a temple were obtained by an alien ruler, and held for a period of years at the cost of repeated battles with the king within whose territory the temple stood.

643 701 664 The power of the king to command his Nayar retainers was checked by periodic assemblies of Nayars (koottams). If the king's foreign policy were disfavoured by the Nayars of a particular nad, or if their own chief failed to pay them promptly, the village military leaders, with some of their followers, assembled in a body called a nad koottam and threatened to defect to some alien ruler. This occasionally happened: cases are recorded of the defection of a whole nad from one ruler to another. Similarly within the desam, small assemblies called desa-koottams might force their policy on their local leader or stage a strike until they compelled him to pay them their dues.

692 681 Within the kingdom, justice was administered at several levels. First, each local caste group had its own periodic assembly of adult men to punish offences against caste law [33] and to arbitrate in small civil disputes within the caste. For the larger castes of Iravas and Pulayas the local caste group was the village: married men met periodically to arrange public ceremonies of their caste and punish offenders. These comprised chiefly wrongful interdining, small debts, thefts and assaults within the caste, and intra-caste adultery. Fines for the upkeep of the caste

2:Gough E-4, 5 (1947-1949)1961 A Wll Kerala A Wll
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vals involved animal sacrifice by Nayars in which Brahmans and temple servants took no part.

Consistent with these differences in ritual practice, Nambudiris and temple servants were vegetarians and followed rules of non-violence. Royals, chiefs, and Nayar retainers were warriors and until modern times usually ate meat and drank liquor. The matrilineal castes of temple servants were otherwise culturally similar to Nayars, with whom they probably had a common origin.

Below the Chakkyars and the Pushpagans, the Nambyars, Psharodis, Variyars, and Puduvals disputed for ritual rank and would not interdine. These castes ranked roughly parallel to the district chiefs, with whom they had few social relations and did not interdine. They ranked above the retainer Nayars, who might receive food from them but might not give to them. Marars ranked below the other temple servants and parallel to retainer Nayars, with whom, however, they had few social relations outside the temple and did not interdine.

The Nayar Menials in Temples Below all these aristocratic castes came certain small matrilineal castes of menial, non-military Nayars whose work was largely connected with temples. Vattekad Nayars were oilmongers; Odatt Nayars, tile makers; Andura Nayars, temple potters. One Vattekad lineage was present in every village to supply oil for temple lamps. Often the headman of the Vattekad lineage was the shaman of the Nayar Bhagavadi temple. Vattekad Nayars also performed household tasks for Kiriattil Nayar village headmen, which ordinary Kiriattil Nayars were too proud to do. Odatt and Andura Nayars were very small castes,[8] and one lineage might serve six or eight villages.

The Nayar Servant Castes Below the temple menials came three matrilineal castes of servant Nayars with "degrading" occupations. Chidigans (called Attikurssis in the Calicut kingdom) were funeral priests of the higher matrilineal castes. Veluttedans were washermen of all the castes above them and Vilakkataravans were barbers of all the castes above them. One lineage of each was usually present in a village. Funeral priests ranked above barbers and washermen, who disputed for rank and would not interdine.

Social Relations among the Higher Castes The castes so far men-

[8] The kings permitted only Brahmans, royalty, and the greater chiefs to roof their houses and temples with tiles. Tile making was therefore a minor craft, and temple pottery was of superior quality to that used by commoners. The ordinary polluting caste of potters, Kumbarans, camped outside villages and exchanged their wares for grain.

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HIS HIGHNESS SIR RAMA VARMA, G.C.S.I., G.C.I.E., F.M.U.,
RAJA OF COCHIN.

[frontispiece]

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411 disengaged as quickly whenever he drops his 'musquet' in the wood or slings it across his shoulders for the purpose of rushing to close encounter with this terrible instrument." [1]

704 Cavalry was unknown; there was only infantry. The sol-
714 diers wore a silk cloth wound round the head and carried
411 swords, shields, lances and bows. The king had an umbrella
[293] formed of the leaves of a tree and fixed on to the end of a cane,
[643] for protection from the sun. There was no standard. When they were in battle, and one army was at a distance from the
726 other, two ranges of a cross-bow, the king would ask the Brah-
704 mans to go to the camp of the enemy and tell the knights to let one hundred of his men fight with the same number on his side, when both the parties would go to the central space to do so. The fighting continued even for three days, when blows were given on the head and at the legs. After the death of some men on either side, the survivors were directed to return to their camps. If any more fighting was desired, the same
[465] course was adopted. Sometimes the king rode on an elephant,
[701] and sometimes the Nayars carried him. The pay of a soldier was four carlini a month, and in time of war half a ducat.

701 The Nayars whom the king received in his service were
443 never dismissed, however old they might be. They received their pay and rations, and the king granted favours to whoso-ever had served him well. If, however, they were left unpaid for some years, some four or five hundred of the aggrieved would rise up and go in a body to the palace, and send word to the king that they would go away dismissed, because he did not give them food. The king would then beg them to have patience, pay them at once either the whole amount due to them or a part of it with a promise to pay the balance at an early date. The king generally satisfied them, considering it a disgrace that they should go away to serve under another ruler. Even
[784] in times of war they were not at liberty to touch any peasant, or eat and drink with him in his house without penal-ty. The king was bound to support the mother and family
[752] of any soldier who died in war. He also treated, at his own expense, any soldier who was wounded in battle. [2]

1. Abbe Dubois People of India.
2. A Description of the Coasts of East Africa and Malabar, page 130-131, Duarte Barbosa.

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which precede or follow it.[1] Information is then given to the relatives, and friends of the family regarding the performance of the ceremony on a certain date, when invitations are sent around to those that should attend the wedding. The ceremony then opens with a fixing of the post[2] for the erection of a pandal which is tastefully decorated and in which the ceremony is performed. The male members of the village are invited and treated to a feast followed by the distribution of betel leaf, arecanuts and tobacco for chewing.[3] In the Cochin State, every time the ceremony is performed in a privileged family, or in one wishing to obtain privileges, a member thereof visits His Highness the Raja with presents (*thirumulkázhcha*), and requests his permission for the celebration. Similar presents are also made to the Nambuthiri *jenmies* by their tenants and others attached to the *illams*. It is interesting to note that certain privileges, such as sitting on grass mats, having a procession with an elephant, beating of drums, firing of pop-guns, worshipping of the Sun on a platform especially constructed, have often to be obtained from the ruler of the State.[4] Then follows the *Ashtamangalyam Vekkal* (procession to the marriage pandal to place the eight auspicious things, namely rice, paddy, tender leaves of cocoanut trees, an arrow, a looking glass, a well washed cloth, lighted fire, and a small wooden box called cheppu) which is a formal beginning of the ceremony, or if necessary, earlier still, and for which a *Bráhmani* is invited. On the night previous to the ceremony, the girl neatly dressed and adorned in her best is taken by her caste-women to a reserved spot in the house (*Patinnáttu Iruttal*, seating on the western side), where some ceremonies are gone through, and the *Brahmani* or *Pushpini* entertains the party with her songs, chiefly *Puránic*. Soon after, the girl and the female members of the family, dressed in gay attire and decked with costly ornaments, come out in procession to the pandal where the

1. The village astrologer is entitled to be formally invited. He makes certain predictions at the sight of the messenger about the results of the marriage. When he arrives at the gate of the house, he is formally received, and he makes certain other predictions from the movement of the flame of a lamp as to the result, happy or otherwise, of the marriage. In the latter case he suggests some remedies.
2. For this also an auspicious hour is fixed by the astrologer.
3. A few important members sit together and prepare a kind of list for the purchase of provisions for the feast and other expenses.
4. Such privileges are permanently enjoyed by certain aristocratic families. Some obtain them on marriage occasions.

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a Nayar *tarawád*, all the members are equally entitled to a share. The self-acquisitions of each member of a *tarawád* are at his absolute disposal during his life-time, but this right lapses to the *tarawád* on his death.[1] In families where the *káranavans* look after the welfare of each individual member and the savings of the junior members go to increase the wealth of the family, there is peace and prosperity. Such families are rarely found in these days. Times are changed, as also the conditions of the community, and the old and large families are disappearing through mismanagement. In the majority of cases, when the senior member takes up the management, he is too old and unfit to govern a score of men and women younger than himself and bound to him by no natural tie of affection. He often becomes a mere puppet in the hands of an unscrupulous but stronger member while the other members of the *tarawád* suffer from the injustice consequent under such circumstances. In some cases he misappropriates the family property and alienates it in favour of his wife and children, and the gross acts of spoliation carried on by *káranavan* have reduced some of the respectable families in Malabar and elsewhere to poverty and misery. It is also said, that the junior members are disobedient and do not work for the common good and this state of things is also common everywhere. Another cause for the downfall of the ancient family system is the growing disinclination among its junior members to work for the common good of the *tarawád* and their dislike to the rule of the *káranavan*.[2]

The Nayars who follow this *marumakkathíyam* law of inheritance include nearly all the aristocracy of the country, but the notion that every *tarawád* has an estate sufficient to feed an indefinite number of souls is unfounded and erroneous. Most of the families are poor, and the *káranavans* are mere tenant farmers cultivating a few acres of land on a precarious tenure, and a law which requires such a man, from the produce of his farm, to feed and provide for all the descendants of his female relatives from the time of their birth to their death, whether they work or not, is one of those laws which continue to exist in name but are actually disregarded in practice.[3]

Tribal organisations.

In ancient times the rulers of Cochin held supreme sway in the territories which belonged to them. There were no regular councils, nor assemblies;

1. II, Mad. H. C. R. 162.
2 and 3. Malabar Marriage Commission Report, pages 49-51.

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631 and the Rajas were mostly guided by their own will and plea-
643 sure unless it ran counter to the customs of the country. Many
[644] of them had learned Brahmans to instruct them in the funda-
mental and long established laws of the country.

646 Certain checks upon their arbitrary power existed in the form of general assemblies of the nation, but these were seldom held. These were of two kinds: those assembled under the orders of the Raja, and those assembled by the spontaneous will of the people. In the former case, messengers, who by
[203] right of birth and descent were entitled to that office, were
[428] despatched in all directions to summon the people. When assembled, they sat in a circle in the open air, while a number of Nayars kept guard over them. The propositions were then discussed, and the measures proposed were rejected or adopted by the unanimous silence or clamour of those present, but in affairs of minor importance not affecting the welfare of the whole community, the chiefs of the nation were summoned, and they decided the questions laid before them.

643 The assemblies summoned by the will of the nation were
646 conducted in much the same manner, but with more impetuo-
578 sity. They were held only in cases of emergency, when the Raja was guilty of extreme tyranny or of gross violation of the law. Then all the landed proprietors were bidden to attend, and if any one dared to refuse to obey the summons, the assembly
[687] sentenced his houses, gardens or estates to be devastated. If he persisted in his disobedience, he would be deprived of his privileges and votes, and might even be sentenced to banishment. As the object of such assemblies was to thwart the will of the ruler, he on his side did all he could to obstruct their holding such assemblies. The Raja had no right nor power to prevent them by force of arms, but he sent *Pandara Patti* (servants of the rulers) to provoke them with all manner of annoyances and to pelt them with stones, sand, and dirt. The Nayars on guard did their best to keep off the assailants with their shields, and, if any one of them, provoked beyond endurance, were to strike or hurt one of the youths, it would be regarded as treason, and, as such, the assembly would be liable to a heavy fine and would be deprived of its inviolability. The Raja might then disperse them by force of arms; but if he failed to subdue them, they would all desert their allegiance. Allies and neighbours did their best to intercede between the parties and to secure for everyone his proper

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rights. Thus did these *kuttams* (assemblies) exercise a wholesome influence, and act as a powerful check upon the rulers and ministers of the middle ages.[1] They also dealt with wider questions of castes and other matters affecting the welfare of the people. In former times there were also minor councils 623
of *Pramdnis* or leaders of the people in every *Desam* exercising similar social functions. A survival of this system even now exists in every village, and their deliberations and decisions upon social matters and caste disputes have great weight. In important matters such as the outcasting of a member of the caste, etc., His Highness the Raja who has always been the [643]
social as well as the political head of the State would deliberate [692]
upon them with the help of the Brahman *vaidiks*, and his decisions become final. The individual who is placed under a ban [688]
is prohibited from entering any temple, bathing in the public tanks, and is, in short, ostracised.

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Administration of justice.

The Rajas were in former times the fountain of all justice, but were assisted by *Karyakkars* or ministers 692
and Brahmans in administering it. All caste disputes and offences were left to the caste assemblies to deal 623
with, while civil disputes were either left to the arbitration of 681
the caste assemblies or of three or four prominent men. There 564
was no written code, but the punishments assigned by custom [671]
fitted the crimes, and they varied with the status of the caste and of the person. The nobles enjoyed the privilege of freedom from confinement. The Brahmans and women were never put to death; the former were punished for grave offences by loss of caste and banishment, and the latter by being sold as slaves. The punishment of death was reserved for such heinous [688]
offences as sacrilege, the wilful murder of a Brahman or a cow. The following is a summary of the account given by 175
Duarte Barbosa, pp. 116—117, regarding the methods of dealing 564
with criminals and the nature of the punishments inflicted on 685
them in former times:—When any member of a low caste committed robbery about which a complaint had been made to the king or the governor, orders were issued for his apprehension, and if he was caught and he confessed his guilt, he was generally impaled. His head was severed, and the body being placed on its back, the arms and legs were fastened with ropes to four posts, while the multitude to show their contempt spat upon it. If, however, the malefactor was a Moor, he was beheaded. The

1. Letters from Malabar by J. C. Visscher, pages 76-77.

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stolen property went to the ruler of the State. If the stolen property was discovered after the escape of the thief, it was returned to the owner after a certain number of days, and a fourth part was appropriated by the State. If, however, a thief refused to confess his guilt, he was confined for a period of eight days during which every method of torture known to the keepers of the prisons was tried to extort his confession. If he continued in reiterating his innocence, it was left to the accuser to elect whether he should be let off or forced to undergo trial by ordeal. In the latter case, on an auspicious day, the accused would be allowed to bathe and recite his daily prayers, after which he was conducted to the idol in the temple. Before the idol he swore that he had not committed the theft nor did he know the guilty person, and plunged his two fingers up to the middle joint into a caldron of boiling oil. If he was burnt, he was accounted guilty of the crime; if unhurt, he was liberated. Another form of proving the guilt or innocence of a prisoner who would not confess his crime, was to make him thrust his hand into a mantle in which a sacred and poisonous snake had been wrapped and force him to lift it out. If he was bitten, he was guilty. A third form was the wading through a tank full of alligators before a pagoda at Palliport, fifteen miles north of Cochin, and if he survived he was considered innocent."[1] Concerning the procedure against the debtors, a curious custom seems to have prevailed, which is thus described by *Varthema*:—

"Let us suppose the case that some one has to pay me twenty-five ducats, and the debtor promises me to pay them many times and does not pay them. I, not being willing to wait any longer, nor to give him any indulgence, shall take a green branch in my hand, shall go softly behind the debtor, and with the said branch shall draw a circle on the ground surrounding him; and if I can enclose him in a circle, shall say to him these words three times: 'I command you by the head of the Brahmans and the king that you do not depart hence, until you have paid me and satisfied me as much as I ought to have from thee,' and he will satisfy me or truly he will die without any other guard, and should he quit the said circle, the king will put him to death."

"It has been already said, that the nobles enjoyed exemption and privileges, and that they could not be taken and put in irons; but if a noble were to rob or kill any one or a cow or to sleep with a woman of low caste or of the Brahmans

1. Letters from Malabar by J. C. Visscher, pages 68-69.

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and one with less than that number was called a *Désavázhi*. There were in those days no taxes levied from the people, and the chief from the Rajas down to the *Désavázhi* possessed demesne lands for their support which were cultivated either by themselves or leased to *kudiyáns* or tenants; but the following were the chief sources of income, based upon feudal rights and privileges. The rulers levied custom duties upon exports and imports, taxes upon houses of fishermen, tradesmen and professional men. Criminal fines went to fill their coffers, and succession duties were levied upon the estates of deceased persons, especially those who held offices of State or rights over land. Outcast women were made a two-fold source of profit. Lewd adulterous women were made over to the chiefs with a premium for the trouble of looking after them, and the chiefs used in turn to sell the women to foreign merchants as slaves or wives to *Chettis*. The estates of persons who died without heirs were escheated, nor could an heir be adopted without the Raja's consent, for which a fee was generally levied. Protection fees from strangers and merchants were levied under various names and customary presents were the ruler's dues on occasions of feast or funeral. Wrecks were his perquisites, and various animals his monopoly. Concerning the former, Marco Polo wrote about the kingdom of Eli, "And you must know that if any ship enters the estuary and anchors when she has been bound for some other port, they seize her and plunder the cargo. They say that you are bound somewhere else, and it is God that sent you hither to us, so we have a right to all your goods, and think it no sin to act thus. This naughty custom prevails all over the Provinces of India, to wit, that if a ship be driven by a stress of weather into some other port than that to which it is bound, it is sure to be plundered. But if a ship came bound originally to the place, they received it with all honour and gave it protection."[1] The custom of the taking of ships and cargoes lasted down to recent times, until the English factory at Tellicherry entered into agreements with three of the country-powers for the exemption of English vessels from such seizures.

Among the animals that became the property of the Raja were cows with three or five dugs, cattle that has killed a man or other animals, cattle with a white spot near the corner of

1. Yulies Marco Polo, page 374.

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the eye, buffaloes with white tips to their tails, wild elephants caught in traps and wild hogs that had fallen into wells. 422 825

Even in social matters, these chieftains had supreme powers. In the settlement of marriages in any part of the country, the Nayars had to obtain the chieftain's sanction who held sway over the particular locality. The custom is even now in vogue though in a visibly weakened form. In the celebration of a *Kettu kalyánam* or *sambandham* in any part of the country, the parties concerned visited the chieftain and bought his consent with presents. For without such consent no settlement and celebration thereafter could be arranged. His consent had to be procured even for the holding of festivals. 634 585 [182] [431] [574]

The chieftain's powers were so great that, if a wife living with her husband proved an object of attraction to another, adequate presents to the chieftain would buy him a formal writ, giving him the rights of a husband over that woman. Thus even so late as only a generation or two ago, the chieftain's power was exercised in the encouragement of polyandry. 595 634

When a tali-tying ceremony had to be performed for a girl of any decent family in a locality, she was taken to the local chieftain with a nuzzar or *tirumulkázhcha* and other things prepared for the festival that was to follow. In return the girl was given a golden bracelet which she was authorised to wear in his presence. No girl who had not received such a one could wear it. 588 634 421

In certain parts of the State people were afraid to erect buildings of more than one storey, lest they should incur the inexorable wrath of the chieftain; nor were they allowed to tile thatched houses. Departures from these customs were allowed only with the consent of the chieftain, embodied in a writ issued by him. In rural parts even to this day such restrictions are not totally inoperative. In the State His Highness the Raja gives his sanction in regard to some social matters even to this day and Nambutiri landlords exercise a similar authority among the tenants occupying their lands. Certain kinds of conveyances such as palanquins and dholies were reserved only for chieftains while the *Pallichans* were the only people who were employed to carry them. Various titles[1] 634 342 [369] [182] 643 566 634 [493] [564] [553]

1. Vide pages 18-20.

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[789] [825] [757] children. Tiger's whiskers have also the same efficacy against demoniacal influence. The flesh is eaten as medicine, while the skin boiled in gingelly oil and strained into the ear, removes deafness.

539 825 There is a common belief that, should the nest of a brahmany kite be found, and one of the young ones be attached to it by a string, the squall breaks away, generally leaving a portion of the line attached to the nest as it becomes strong. The [789] nest which is formed of sticks should then be thrown into a running stream, when, if any of the sticks that compose it float against the current, they will, on being applied to any fetters, cause them immediately to fly into a thousand fragments.

[171] The owl which is an emblem of wisdom in Europe, and the goose that of stupidity, completely change their respective places in the east, the former becoming a symbol of stupidity, the latter that of wisdom.

[787] The hooting of the owl heard at night, has, in all parts of the world and in all ages, been considered ominous of [763] evil, and is consequently much dreaded. In Cochin, it is generally believed, that the hooting of an owl betokens an impending calamity or even the death of an individual near whose abode its loathsome cry is heard; and so, dwellers in the neighbouring houses at once turn out and drive it away.

824 539 [776] Jack-o'-lantern:—These are called *Kollykutta Pisáchus* (ghosts which emit fire from their mouths), and make their appearance on the side of tanks, rivers, and marshy places during rainy or foggy nights. They fly away or disappear at the sight of men and are much dreaded by the people.

Preëminent among the trees in the town of Cochin, and towering above all others along the sea-shore and sides of the back-water are the cocoanut palms (cocos nucifera linn), every portion of which, from the leaves to the roots, may be turned to some useful purpose.

[776] [643] There is a tradition that the Raja of Benares, who was a strenuous worshipper of one supreme God, and rejected the custom of making offerings to inferior divinities, became, in course of time, almost equal to the Gods, and created many of the grains now in common use. As his powers increased, so did his ambition, and he meditated creating another species of human beings very superior to anything then existing in the world. But after he had completed its head, the demi-gods became alarmed and

13:Thurston & Rangachari E-4, 5 (no date)
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101 174 564 [701] [463] occupation, are traders, artisans, oilmongers, palanquin-bearers, and even barbers and washermen. The fact seems to be that successive waves of immigration brought from the Canarese and Tamil countries different castes and different tribes; and these, settling down in the country, adopted the customs and manners, and assumed the caste names of the more respectable of the community that surrounded them. This process of assimilation 101 564 is going on even yet. Chettis of Coimbatore, for example, who settled in Palghāt and Valluvanād within living memory, have developed by this time into [55] Nāyars. In the census schedules we find instances in which the males of a house affix the term Nāyar to their names, while the names of the females end in Chettichi. Gollas entering the country from the north have similarly, in course of time, assumed Nāyar customs and manners, and are now styled Nāyars. Again the rājahs and 643 564 chieftains of the country sometimes raised individuals or classes who had rendered them meritorious service to the rank of Nāyars. These men were thereafter styled Nāyars, but formed a separate sub-division with little or no communion with the rest of the Nāyar class, until at least, after the lapse of generations, when their origin was forgotten. Nāyar may thus at present be considered to be a term almost as wide and general as Sūdra."

173 564 According to the Brāhman tradition, the Nāyar caste is the result of union between the Nambūdris with Dēva, Gandharva and Rakshasa women introduced by Parasurāma; and this tradition embodies the undoubted fact that the caste by its practice of hypergamy has had a very large infusion of Aryan blood. In origin the Nāyars were probably a race of Dravidian immigrants, who were amongst the first invaders of Malabar, and as conquerors assumed the position of the governing and

Zin-ud-din * noticed the fact that, if a chieftain was slain, his followers attacked and obstinately persevered in ravaging the slayer's country, and killing his people till their vengeance was satisfied. This custom is doubtless that which was described so long ago as in the ninth century A.D. by two Muhammadans, whose work was translated by Renaudot (Lond., 1733). 'There are kings who, upon their accession, observe the following ceremony. A quantity of cooked rice was spread before the king, and some three or four hundred persons came of their own accord, and received each a small quantity of rice from the king's own hands after he himself had eaten some. By eating of this rice they all engage themselves to burn themselves on the day the king dies or is slain, and they punctually fulfil their promise.' Men, who devoted themselves to certain death on great occasions, were termed Amoucos by the Portuguese; and Barbosa, one of the Portuguese writers, alluded to the practice as prevalent among the Nāyars. Purchas has also the following:—'The king of Cochin hath a great number of Gentlemen, which he calleth Amocchi, and some are called Nairi: these two sorts of men esteem not their lives anything, so that it may be for the honour of the king.' The proper Malayālam term for such men was Chāver, literally those who took up, or devoted themselves to death. It was a custom of the Nāyars, which was readily adopted by the Māppillas, who also at times—as at the great Mahāmakkam, twelfth year feast, at Tirunāvāyi †—devoted themselves to death in the

* The author of Tahafat-ul-Mujahidin or hints for persons seeking the way to God, as it is frequently translated, or more literally an offering to warriors who shall fight in defence of religion against infidels. Translated by Rowlandson. London, 1833.

† See Manual of the Malabar district, 164, sq., and Fawcett, Madras Museum Bull., III, 3, 1901.

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company of Nāyars for the honour of the Valluvanad Rāja. And probably the frantic fanatical rush of the Māppillas on British bayonets, which is not even yet a thing of the past, is the latest development of this ancient custom of the Nāyars. The martial spirit of the Nāyars in these piping times of peace has quite died out for want of exercise. The Nāyar is more and more becoming a family man. Comparatively few of them now-a-days even engage in hunting." According to an inscription of the King Kulōttunga I (A.D. 1083-84), he conquered Kudamalai-Nadu, *i.e.*, the western hill country (Malabar), whose warriors, the ancestors of the Nāyars of the present day, perished to the last man in defending their independence.*

The following description of the Nāyars at the beginning of the sixteenth century is given by Duarte Barbosa.† "The Nairs are the gentry, and have no other duty than to carry on war, and they continually carry their arms with them, which are swords, bows, arrows, bucklers, and lances. They all live with the kings, and some of them with other lords, relations of the kings, and lords of the country, and with the salaried governors, and with one another. They are very smart men, and much taken up with their nobility. . . . These Nairs, besides being all of noble descent, have to be armed as knights by the hand of a king or lord with whom they live, and until they have been so equipped they cannot bear arms nor call themselves Nairs. . . . In general, when they are seven years of age, they are immediately sent to school to learn all manner of feats of agility and gymnastics for the use of their weapons.

* E. Hultzsch, South-Indian Inscriptions, III, 2, 1203.

† Description of the Coasts of East Africa and Malabar. Translation. Hakluyt Society, 1866.

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First they learn to dance and then to tumble, and for that purpose they render supple all their limbs from their childhood, so that they can bend them in any direction. 175 828

. . . These Nairs live outside the towns separate from other people on their estates which are fenced in. When they go anywhere, they shout to the peasants, that they may get out of the way where they have to pass; and the peasants do so, and, if they did not do it, the Nairs might kill them without penalty. And, if a peasant were by misfortune to touch a Nair lady, her relations would immediately kill her, and likewise the man that touched her and all his relations. This, they say, is done to avoid all opportunity of mixing the blood with that of the peasants. . . . These are very clean and well-dressed women, and they hold it in great honour to know how to please men. They have a belief amongst them that the woman who dies a virgin does not go to paradise." 175 564 683 175 564 831

Writing in the eighteenth century, Hamilton states * that "it was an ancient custom for the Samorin (Zamorin) to reign but twelve years, and no longer. If he died before his term was expired, it saved him a troublesome ceremony of cutting his own throat on a public scaffold erected for that purpose. He first made a feast for all his nobility and gentry, who were very numerous. After the feast he saluted his guests, went on the scaffold, and very neatly cut his own throat in the view of the assembly. His body was, a little while after, burned with great pomp and ceremony, and the grandees elected a new Samorin. Whether that custom was a religious or a civil ceremony I know not, but it is now laid aside, and a new custom is followed by the modern Samorin, that a jubilee is 175 643 762 175 178 643 796

* New Account of the East Indies, 1744.

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175 proclaimed throughout his dominion at the end of twelve
178 years, and a tent is pitched for him in a spacious plain,
643 and a great feast is celebrated for ten or twelve days with
796 mirth and jollity, guns firing night and day, so at the end of the feast any four of the guests that have a mind to gain a crown by a desperate action in fighting their way through thirty or forty thousand of his guards, and kill the Samorin in his tent, he that kills him succeeds him in his empire. In Anno 1695 one of these jubilees happened, and the tent pitched near Ponnany, a sea-port of his about fifteen leagues to the southward of Calicut. There were but three men that would venture on that desperate action, who fell on, with sword and target, among the guards, and, after they had killed and wounded many, were themselves killed. One of the desperadoes had a nephew of fifteen or sixteen years of age that kept close by his uncle in the attack on the guards, and, when he saw him fall, the youth got through the guards into the tent, and made a stroke at his Majesty's head, and had certainly dispatched him if a large brass lamp which was burning over his head had not marred the blow, but, before he could make another, he was killed by the guards, and I believe the same Samorin reigns yet."

175 564 683 It is noted by Sonnerat * that the Nāyars "are the warriors; they have also the privilege of enjoying all the women of their caste. Their arms, which they constantly carry, distinguish them from the other tribes. They are besides known by their insolent haughtiness. When they perceive pariahs, they call out to them, even at a great distance, to get out of their way, and, if any one of these unfortunate people approaches too near a Nair, and through inadvertence touches him, the Nair has a right

* Voyage to the East Indies, 1774 and 1781.

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Travancore. It is a distinctive suffix to the names of Nāyar sons of Travancore Sovereigns. But, in ancient times, this title was conferred on others also, in recognition of merit. Tambis alone proceed in palanquins, and appear before the Mahārāja without a head-dress. The consorts of Mahārājas are selected from these families. If a lady from outside is to be accepted as consort, she is generally adopted into one of these families. The title Karta, or doer, appears also to have been used as a titular name by some of the rulers of Madura. [At the Madras census, 1901, Kartākkal was returned by Balijas claiming to be descendants of the Nāyak kings of Madura and Tanjore.] The Tekkumkur and Vadakkumkur Rājas in Malabar are said to have first conferred the title Karta on certain influential Nāyar families. In social matters the authority of the Karta was supreme, and it was only on important points that higher authorities were called on to intercede. All the Kartas belong to the Illam sub-division of the Nāyar caste. The title Kuruppu, though assumed by other castes than Nāyars, really denotes an ancient section of the Nāyars, charged with various functions. Some were, for instance, instructors in the use of arms, while others were superintendents of maid-servants in the royal household. Writing concerning the Zamorin of Calicut about 1500 A.D., Barbosa states that "the king has a thousand waiting women, to whom he gives regular pay, and they are always at the court to sweep the palaces and houses of the king, and he does this for the State, because fifty would be enough to sweep." When a Mahārāja of Travancore enters into a matrimonial alliance, it is a Kuruppu who has to call out the full title of the royal consort, Panappillai Amma, after the presentation of silk and cloth has been performed. The title Panikkar is derived from pani, work.

556 553 424 [644] [584] [595] [643] [564] [644] 175 556 644 643 584 553 644

564 this tract or nād there were originally six stānis or chief-
634 tains, who ruled, under the Rāja, with the assistance, or subject to the constitutional control, of four assemblies of Nāyars called Kūttams. Each kūttam had its hereditary president. In this tract there are seven groups of kulams. The highest includes twelve kulams, Vengalat, Pattillat, Viyyūr, Nelliōt, Atunkudi, Amayangalat, Nellōli, Nilanchēri, Rendillat, Pulliyāni, Orakātteri, and
[553] Venmēri. Of these, the Pattillat and Rendillat (members of the ten and members of the two illams or houses) affix the title Adiyōdi to their names, the last three affix the title Nambiyar, and the rest affix Nāyar. Of the six stānis already mentioned, three, with the title of Adiyōdi, belong to the Vengalat kulam, while two of the presidents of kuttams belonged to the Pattillat kulam. The younger members of the stāni houses are called kidavu. It is the duty of women of Viyyūr and Nelliōt kulams to join in the bridal procession of members of the Vengalat kulam, the former carrying lamps, and the latter salvers containing flowers, while the Rendillat Adiyōdis
564 furnish cooks to the same class. Pattillat Adiyōdis
783 and Orakātteri Nambiyars observe twelve days' pollution, while all the other kulams observe fifteen. The second group consists of six kulams, Eravattūr, Ara-Eravattūr (or half Eravattūr), and Attikōdan Nāyars, Tonderi Kidāvus, Punnan Nambiyars, and Mēnōkkis. All these observe fifteen days' pollution. The third group consists of three kulams, Tacchōli to which the remaining three stānis belong, Kōthōli, and Kuruvattān-
[553] chēri. All affix Nāyar to their names, and observe fifteen days' pollution. The fourth group consists of three kulams, Peruvānian Nambiyars, Chellādan Nāyars,
[643] and Vennapālan Nāyars. All three observe fifteen days' pollution. The name Peruvānian means great or

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principal oil-man ; and it is the duty of this caste to present the Kurumbranâd Râja with oil on the occasion of his formal installation. The fifth group consists of the three kulams, Mannangazhi, Paramchela, and Pallikara Nâyars, all observing fifteen days' pollution. A member of the first-named class has to place an âmanapalaga (the traditional seat of Nambûdiris and other high castes) for the Kurumbranâd Râja to sit on at the time of his installation, while a member of the second has to present him with a cloth on the same occasion. The sixth group consists of four kiriyams named Patam, Tulu, Manan, and Ottu respectively, and has the collective name of Râvâri. The seventh group consists of six kulams, Kandôn, Kannankôdan, Kotta, Karumba, Kundakollavan, and Panakâdan Nâyars. All observe fifteen days' pollution, and the women of these six kulams have certain duties to perform in connection with the purification of women of the Vengalat, Pattillat, and Orakatteri kulams. Besides these seven groups, there are a few other classes without internal sub-divisions. One such class is known as Pâppini Nâyar. A woman of this class takes the part of the Brâhmini woman (Nambissan) at the tâli-kettu kalyanam of girls belonging to the kulams included in the third group. Another class called Pâlattavan takes the place of the Attikurissi Nâyar at the funeral ceremonies of the same three kulams."

In illustration of the custom of polyandry among the Nâyars of Malabar in by-gone days, the following extracts may be quoted. "On the continent of India," it is recorded in Ellis' edition of the Kural, "polyandry is still said to be practiced in Orissa, and among particular tribes in other parts. In Malayâlam, as is well known, the vision of Plato in his ideal republic is more completely

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184 of pān-supāri. Every time that a marriage ceremony is
[574] celebrated, a member of the family visits His Highness
the Rāja with presents, and solicits his permission for
the celebration. Such presents are often made to the
Nambūdri Jenmis (landlords), by their tenants, and by
[427] castes attached to illams. It may be noted that certain
● [643] privileges, such as sitting on a grass mat, having an
elephant procession, drumming, firing of pop-guns, etc.,
have often to be obtained from the Ruler of the State.
The marriage itself begins with the procession to the
marriage pandal with the eight auspicious things
(ashtamangalyam) and pattiniruththal (seating for song),
at the latter of which a Brāhmini or Pushpini sings certain
songs based upon suitable Purānic texts. The girls and
other female members of the family, dressed in gay attire
and decked with costly ornaments, come out in pro-
cession to the pandal, where the Pushpini sings, with
tom-toms and the firing of pop-guns at intervals. After
three, five, or seven rounds of this, a cutting of the
jasmine placed in a brass pot is carried on an elephant
by the Elayad or family priest to the nearest Bhagavati
temple, where it is planted on the night previous to the
ceremonial day with tom-toms, fireworks, and joyous
shouts of men and women. A few hours before the
auspicious moment for the ceremony, this cutting is
[782] brought back. Before the tāli is tied, the girls are
brought out of the room, and, either from the ground
itself or from a raised platform, beautifully decorated
with festoons, etc., are made to worship the sun. The
bridegroom, a Tirumulpād or an enangan, is then
brought into the house with sword in hand, with tom-
toms, firing of pop-guns, and shouts of joy. At the gate
he is received by a few female members with ashta-
mangalyam in their hands, and seated on a bench or

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tamarind, and mango. The whole house is known as vitu. The houses are built on various models, such as pattayappura, nālukettu, ettukettu, and kuttikettu."

Concerning the dress of the Nāyars, Mr. N. Subramani Aiyar writes that "the males dress themselves in a mundu (cloth), a loose lower garment, and a towel. A neriyatu, or light cloth of fine texture with coloured border, is sometimes worn round the mundu on festive occasions. Coats and caps are recent introductions, but are eschewed by the orthodox as unnational. It is noted by Mr. Logan that 'the women clothe themselves in a single white cloth of fine texture, reaching from the waist to the knees, and occasionally, when abroad, they throw over the shoulder and bosom another similar cloth. But by custom the Nāyar women go uncovered from the waist. Upper garments indicate lower caste, or sometimes, by a strange reversal of Western notions, immodesty.' Edward Ives, who came to Anjengo about 1740, observes that 'the groves on each bank of the river are chiefly planted with cocoanut trees, and have been inhabited by men and women in almost a pure state of nature, for they go with their breasts and bellies entirely naked. This custom prevails universally throughout every caste from the poorest planter of rice to the daughter or consort of the king upon the throne.'" [According to ancient custom, Nāyar women in Travancore used to remove their body-cloth in the presence of the Royal Family. But, since 1856, this custom has been abolished, by a proclamation during the reign of H.H. Vanchi Bala Rāma Varma Kulasakhara Perumal Bhagiodya Rāma Varma. In a critique on the Indian Census Report, 1901, Mr. J. D. Rees observes* that

* Nineteenth Century, 1904.

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part in the political history of the country, for it was the great bulwark against the tyranny and oppression of the Rājas. The evidence of the Honourable East India Company's linguist (interpreter, agent) at Calicut, which appears in the diary of the Tellicherry Factory under date 28th May, 1746, deserves to be here reproduced. He wrote as follows: 'These Nāyars, being heads of the Calicut people, resemble the parliament, and do not obey the king's dictates in all things, but chastise his ministers when they do unwarrantable acts.' The parliament referred to must have been the kūttam (assembly) of the nād. The kūttam answered many purposes when combined action on the part of the community was necessary. The Nāyars assembled in their kūttams whenever hunting, or war, or arbitration, or what not was in hand, and this organisation does not seem to have been confined to Malabar, for the koot organisation of the people of South Canara gave the British officers much trouble in 1832–33. In so far as Malabar was concerned, the system seems to have remained in an efficient state down to the time of the British occupation, and the power of the Rājas was strictly limited. Mr. Murdoch Brown, of Anjarakandi, who knew the country well, thus wrote to Mr. Francis Buchanan in the earliest years of the present (nineteenth) century regarding the despotic action of the Rājas when constituted, after the Mysorean conquest, the revenue agents of the Government of Haidar Ali. 'By this new order of things, these latter (the Rājas) were vested with despotic authority over the other inhabitants, instead of the very limited prerogatives that they had enjoyed by the feudal system, under which they could neither exact revenue from the lands of their vassals, nor exercise any, direct authority in their districts.' And

631 643 again, 'The Rāja was no longer what he had been, the head of a feudal aristocracy with limited authority, but the all-powerful deputy of a despotic prince, whose military force was always at his command to curb or chastise any of the chieftains who were inclined to dispute or disobey his mandates.'* From the earliest times, therefore, down to the end of the eighteenth century, the Nāyar tara and nād organization kept the country from oppression and tyranny on the part of the rulers, and to this fact more than to any other is due the comparative prosperity, which the Malayāli country so long enjoyed, and which made Calicut at one time the great emporium of trade between the East and the West. But, besides protection, the Nāyars had originally another most important function in the body politic. Besides being protectors, they were also supervisors or overseers, a duty which, as a very ancient deed testifies, was styled kānam—a Dravidian word derived from the verb kānuka (to see, etc.). Parasu Rāman (so the tradition preserved in the Kēralolpatti runs) separated the Nāyars into taras, and ordered that to them belonged the duty of supervision (*lit.* kan = the eye), the executive power (*lit.* kei = the hand, as the emblem of power), and the giving of orders (*lit.* kalpana, order, command), so as to prevent the rights from being curtailed, or suffered to fall into disuse. The Nāyars were originally the overseers or supervisors of the nād, and they seem to have been employed in this capacity as the collectors of the share of produce of the land originally reserved for Government purposes. As remuneration for this service, and for their other function as protectors, another share of the produce of the soil

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* Buchanan, Mysore, Canara and Malabar.